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BEYOND THE BANK
OF MIST

ISAAC REIMAN BAXLEY

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BEYOND THE BANK OF MIST

A POEM

BY

ISAAC RIEMAN BAXLEY

AUTHOR OF

"THE TEMPLE OF ALANTHUR," "THE PROPHET,"
"SONGS OF THE SPIRIT."



BUFFALO
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DEDICATION.

*Beyond the bank of mist,
Close in the crystal sea,
Almost ashore, my Mother
Is waiting there for me.*

*She's waiting, and she watches
Keenly the shining main ;
Sometimes I know she catches
My eager cry of pain.*

*"Ah, if he knew the radiance
Just here within the sea,
He scarce could keep his Spirit
From rushing on to me.*

*"My Child, a moment longer,
Thy touch is on the tide,
Thou on these pleasant billows
Shalt journey by my side.*

*"O Child, this is my pleasure
To wait upon the sea,
And listen to the measure
Of thy coming unto me."*

*Ah, well I know she watches
Keenly the crystal sea,
Sometimes my Spirit catches
Her eager gaze for me.*

BEYOND THE BANK OF MIST.

BEYOND THE BANK OF MIST.

SOME scanned the flashing stars, wondered and knew
Of splendid secrets in their light and shade,
And some looked long what homes they traveled to—
What mighty heavens their mighty selves o'erlaid.

Not in the sea nor cloud ; sublimities
Of any sudden star's intensity,
Nor in the longest space that vacant lies
Was what my Soul in search should answering see.

I stood ; and an absorbing, vivid flame,
Which was not earth, nor sun, nor heavens, nor star,
Rushed through the inner darkness of my frame,
And drew me past where these things measured are.

Far back, over the fashion of my years,
Where their revolving circles hung displayed,
Another Vision stands, and calmly wears,
Flashing unrolled, the cycles that I made.

Where are ye, O forgotten, vanished years?

Ye are not Time, ye fade, and change, and die,
Your likeness perishes ; it disappears
In Spirit's splendid touch of alchemy.

Thou drawest down the magic of thy hands,
My Spirit, and with certain, changeless tongue,
Parting the darkness, formest thy commands
Out in the quivering space, where nothing hung.

With words of perfect purpose, but of Time
Unknowing till thyself I yielding be,
Which being, Spirit, doth instilled define
Into my sounding speech thyself and me?

Lest thou and I, unseen, deliverèd,
Unconscious of what mystic shape we use,
Vanish unspoken to the speechless dead,
Depart, with hidden lips that did refuse ;—

Lest we imperfect sadden, lo, I fill
Into the sounds of speech thy subtle share,
Thyself art Spirit-broken save thy will
Outpeal into my unaccustomed air.

How should'st thou after shine with face that bears
My image, but whose vacant heart had not
Of hope in time, nor thought, nor taste of years
Whose hands had touched thee had I not forgot?

Within thee, and thy splendid, widening gaze
A sudden cloud would foam, and fill the spot
Where hung the lamps of many, many days
Thou should'st have seen and known, and knew them
not.

Speak on : if still with soundless lips 'tis thine
More than all measure to sustain the flow,
My echoing speech can gather and refine
Only in thee—whose silent lips bestow.

What country kept thee? Thou wert unexpressed—
I dark and wearied ; suddenly upgrew,
In all the dreadful stillness sat distressed
Around me, Spirit : I saw thee there and knew.

What other sound hath ever song in me?
Beholding thee, outgazing into Time,
What can the orbs thou openest ever see,
Expanding, but thyself in shades sublime?

Over thy wide, mysterious firmament
Reflecting stands a far, unbroken flame,
All things sweep outward with its strong intent,
My Spirit opened in it and became—

Vivid, and vividly the senses burned
Out of myself, and I outstood as one
Torn from the substance of a globe that turned
From quivering cloud to a transparent sun.

How can I name thee, O thou glorious flame?
Thou burnest up the sounds of speech, and sight
Breaks from the face of being, keeping claim
Along thy stretched extent of infinite.

There is within thee sense of endless light,
It is impossible I stand to see
Place where thou wast not ; portion, distance, height
Not yielding to thy rolling boundary.

All, all the rapid stars wheeling away
Over whatever courses in their tide,
Gleam in thy splendidness ; superbly they
Rush on, in thine identity supplied.

I cannot see, but on, forever on
 Bursts out th' expanded presence of thy will,
O Spirit, who shall cease with purpose done
 For thee—who finished stand and thou be still?

Needless to question, and contend with Time
 That it should show thee, Old Magnificence,
Or stretch the circuits of thy forms sublime,
 Or name with any name thy proud intents.

Not yet the song, nor yet the psaltery
 To gather up thy glorious chords and fling
Abroad majestic tales, that peoples see
 What courses claim thine own instinctive wing.

Not yet to see the million worlds that fly
 On monstrous footways through the monstrous glades
Where God exists, but, in my circle, I
 Stand and discern the light's increasing shades.

I see the clouds ascending, and the place
 Of my nativity break on the air
Of an intense existence, in the space
 Where once it hung, in questioning despair.

I see the Spirit's glory, Spirit-wise,
 Burst on the darkness of deceit and death;
I stand in listening, lo, the rapid cries
 We cannot stem seal up the lips of breath.

But there's no shade in all the countless years
 Can shadow me, my Spirit and my heart,
There is no gulf, forever flooding tears,
 Can overwhelm the glittering path whereby I part:

For it is burning in the Spirit's flame:
 I cannot, O I cannot lift the eyes
Of scorning witnesses; nor call the name
 They are demanding in their long replies.

I cannot draw the cloud that rolls between
 This wonder of my Spirit and the eyes
Hid otherward; all things go by unseen
 And dreadful darkness fills their vacancies.

Nor know I if our World is old and wide
 Enough to bear the happy Souls that flee
Over the streams of Time into that tide
 Of fathomless expanse, Eternity.

How long do we look backward to the shore
And see the waves of Spirit burst on Time,
How long we'll pass the waters o'er and o'er,
Waiting the Souls that be in darker clime,—

I nothing know: in all the armory
Of splendid powers, guarding the heavenly ways,
What mighty victor's set, expectantly
For us illumining his fearless rays,—

I nothing know: I know Spirit is pure,
Dauntless, eternal; shall forever wait,
And hope, and hide its failures, and endure
Whatever worlds of exile or estate.

I can not die: in all the fashioned fields,
Remotely forming Heaven, in any star
Where never ending space distantly yields
A roadway absolute, intensely far;—

On World whatever, dead, and flying on
Through darkness, rapid, cold and oceanless,
With nothing living, and no breath, alone,
Dead to the heart, silent and motionless:—

On any World I could not die, but be,
Through years and years, gazing in blackest space,
With eyes that burned in darkness, but should see
Not anything—nor any see my face:

But still not die: onward the ages roll
And onward I, whatever vast display
Of distance solitary my chained Soul
Should constant cleave on that wild orbit's way.

But never die: I should outlast till fell
My Globe to nothingness, and was dispersed
Over the rapid paths that kept the spell
Whence rose its movements—where it sank immersed.

Love touched me with immortal hands, and blazed
Within me—what I was—immortal spark
Where all had been unshining, and it gazed,
Light gleaming through me, out into the dark.

Some sun must flash into the fields and guide
The deathless patience of transparent eyes
Out of whatever passage, weary, wide,
They rushed by dark and dreadful destinies.

Is Love dashed outward from the rim of Earth
And lost forever in the voids where swim
Particular stars, chasing a mighty girth
Of passage over roadways vast and dim?

What Star shall go with slow, reluctant feet
Awaiting him, poor outcast of a World?
What Globe shall cease its rapid course of fleet
Intensity for pinions torn and whirled?

Ah no, not so: my Spirit brake and turned
Out of the world of Stars, and stood alone;
Blind to their fearful globes of fire that burned
In fervid flight, I dared them all disown.

They rest on endless seas and seas of space,
Float in their vastness on a splendid tide,
But I — O Spirit draw me to Thy place
Held from th' impassioned stars, and them denied.

'Tis Thine to keep me, or release and guide
The windless ways of my outstarting Soul
Over Thy perfect visions, where I glide
Instinct with beauty of Thine own control.

What are the stars to me? The paths they go
Are set in clouds of glory, but I bide
That burst of beauty where my Soul shall know
The gaze of things that every star supplied.

I cannot see them wheel and be content,
I cannot see them die and think that they
Are all of splendiddness : Whatever sent
Them blazing, suns my Spirit's startling way.

And I am free, and they imprisoned fade :
Fresh suns start into vacant fields and fly
Mysterious paths, but they are wrapped and made
Of Time's inferior essence, and they die.

It matters not how long, or cold and slow,
With years innumerable, or fearful plane
Of distance, still they start, and live, and go,
Creatures of Time, and Time's decease obtain.

And shall I perish? There's not any star
Can throb with me ; no panting suns can feel
Release from Time, or wish, or purpose far
Dissevered from the glittering roads they wheel.

What's theirs I yield them, and depart and go
With wings they know not, and with eyes that they
Could never glorify if all I know
Stop o'er the meaning of their wild array.

I know on Earth my yearning pulses were
Upstarted, and I know the Stars endowed
My Spirit with their beauty, and appear
The worlds of God, held on the mists and cloud.

But there's another : lo, I long to see
With the wide vision of a Soul that lies
With lids still slumbering in mortality,
And still with clouds of patience on its eyes.

Be strong, my Spirit, bide ; resistlessly
Break when thy closure goes ; put on thy guise
Of being gained in bold capacity
To pass from space of world's sublimities.

Be child of Spirit ; Spirit-wise to dwell
On any world, circling in any star
Where God thy tale of Spirit-life shall tell,
And where, whatever plains, thy pathways are.

Deep in mysterious passages of suns,
Detailed to thoughts of beauty, and design
Of witnessing where wide thy planet runs
Thou seest her circle with the stars combine.

Thou seest stretch the future pathways dim
For the great messengers of God, who go
Over the shoreless seas of space, and swim
Glittering with vivid night and rapid flow.

From world to world, in space from star to star,
Spreads out thy sense of glory and delight
Where the swift shades of being rise, and far
Fling out the essence of their globes through night.

There shalt thine aspect gather and increase,
There shalt thou gaze, and break th' horizons wide
Where swim the ceaseless lights through ceaseless seas,
Quenchlessly conscious of eternal tide.

They cannot perish, the vast fields of God,
They cannot end, the oceans of the Soul,
No matter what the place that's yet untrod
Some sun may rise, and startled planet roll.

Little by little, lightening my Soul, I see ;
I see the tireless circuits rising spread,
The multitudinous stars break over me,
Forward they fly, on a vast impulse fed.

Because, O God, because in me arose,
Started, the light and consciousness sublime
That hurls the orbit as it flashing goes,
And chains the compass of its circling time.

From thee! Thou lookest from afar; shall I
Refuse the Vision—rooted refuse—decline
The fearful aspect of Thine endless sky—
More stubborn than a sun refuse a sign?

Swung with his ponderous weight impalpably
On nothingness, a flaming world ascends
Whatever paths thou pointest: shall I be
Dead to the Word such vast commotion lends?

O'er miles and miles—millions of drifting space—
Plunges the ardor of his ready glow
Seeking the Earth: he sees her radiant face
Smiling in air: shall I refuse to know—

So much of space—so much of life—so much
Of power's vast heritage; of instinct fine
Am I to stop, dissolve, turn at the touch
Eternity outstretches upon mine?

Am I enclosed and held so far from Thee?
Condemned in the vast ocean of Thy Will
Only Thy monstrous worlds as sparks to see,
In all their rush of flight behold them still?

Not ever witness light that fills Thine eyes;
My God, not know forever how afar
O'er all that is Thy knowledge resting lies,
Whatever worlds are swung, or flames, or star?

I cannot satisfy my longing so;
Hung in the midst of wild immensities
How can my Spirit slumber—how forego
Presence outstretching in their brilliancies?

Ah, Glorious God, it is not so; for now
Faintly inbreaking cometh certainty,
A light, a flame, a spark, a glow that Thou
Hast nurtured fills me, and I living see.

I see the tides of an eternal sea

Where swim the worlds; I see them poised, and skim
Whatever dangerous ways exultingly,
Darting by vivid waves where others swim.

I cannot see an end; I cannot dream

That shore or cloud, or calm, or dread abyss
Could fathom a fierce hollow where the stream
Of all that is should cease, or flow amiss.

Enough: whirled on an aged, lessening Globe

I am; vast in the concourse of a Sun
With planets passing; on a plain where rode
Innumerably the years that time outrun:—

In all, the clouds, the time, the millions, space

Of vastness and of darkness, and the light
Ingrowing, and the far and forming face
Of Earth among her sisters, and the sight—

Of all looked on her, enough is at my will;

I, standing in the midst of wonderment,
Enough is in my instant, and I still
May sweep some compass of that huge intent.

And so I see: dipped in Thy light, O God,
I cannot sleep in shadow, sparkling rise
Incessantly some paths Thy purpose trod,
Incessantly break out Thy destinies.

Flashed into sense of beauty, and profound
Acuteness o'er my Spirit for the light
To witness Thee; in silence born for sound
To stir the passion of a Soul's delight,

It cannot be there is not world nor sphere
To hold me in my stature, and to fill
The void mine eyes must find when they appear
On the horizon of Thy Spirit's will.

I know Thou seest such; if unto Thee
I yield my presence, and with rapid wings
Of love outstretching search Thy sanctity,
To every flight I pass their promise clings.

Such worlds as Thou upholdest in delight;
O distant Earth, impatient child of pain,
Thou knowest not yet of measure, and thy flight
Is sadly paced in that stupendous plain.

Flashing within Thy power and Thy sight,
 Enfixed upon tremendous globes, design
Of what Thou thinkest widens; worlds invite
 Where Thou wouldst have my Spirit's space in Thine.

Where Thou hast pleasure there my sight to be,
 Ah, watchful God, what lengthening could refine
The cold, dull eyes of Earth to strain and see
 This passion of Thy pleasantness divine?

I know my Spirit brightens, and will throw
 Desertion with its darkness on my frame,
I know my body lightens, but I know
 Thou hast the passion, Spirit, in thy name.

Sad compasser of Glory, O my frame,
 When will thy knowledge yield me, when divine
Shall rise my Spirit on the path of flame
 To pass the passage where no course is thine?

Bathed in the light of ever-flowing suns
 That into consciousness arise, and are
Moulded in being with the Life that runs
 From Everlasting Spirit into star;—

Swept onward from the resting globes to be
Unweariedly sustained upon the air
That bears their monstrous fashion eagerly,
And knows not where they cease, nor fail, nor where—

Aught else should circle in it that is not,—
O Spirit, on thine ever-spreading wings,
Return no more, survive, seek not the spot
Where thou must furl thy flight through bitter things.

Some morn shall keep thee, vanished with its cloud,
Some passioned stillness hide thee in the night,
Some wind of Heaven shall bear thee, wrapped and bowed
And nurse thee onwards towards a long delight.

Time, with its shadow dialed upon Earth,
Cloaked thine invention, and obtained delay
To hang upon thine aspect, and thy birth
Stood in its sad disuse by day and day.

But Time must bear thee as the wind its wings
Of action beareth ; rising for flight intense
Thou'st passage hence, darting to distant things
Over the airs that yield thee evidence :—

And o'er a world of ecstasy dost cling,
Doubtful in pleasure, stopped, o'er joy alight,
And with swift pinion of ethereal wing
Dost rush upon the rim of thy delight.

O thou bright spark of Spirit, kindling slow
On the damp breath of Earth, bedimmed, denied,
What evil wind shall shake thy visage now,
What doubt becloud thee, or what shadow hide?

Circling from Earth ; flying for airs that bring
Odors of peace and a divine intent,
High in the fanes of cloud thou burn'st each thing
Of sorrow in a vivid sacrament.

And where? There is a realm—a place—a scene—
I know not where—what orb—nor space—nor by
What brilliant sun propelled, what stars between—
'Mid the vast things where God's decisions lie.

This land is woven of a far design
Laid on the throbs of being, and a maze
Of many shiftings draws the glittering line
Of endless substance through immense displays.

There's never list of beauty ; not a cloud
Draws settled shades of splendor from a sun
Of ever finished pattern ; nor endowed
With end the reels of action hastening run.

Launched on the motions of that ceaseless sea,
O Soul, what ancientness shall ever lose
On it thy passion of expectancy,
What far off thing shall thy closed eyes refuse ?

Thou canst not breast the bosom of this tide
With eyes that fail in distance, and decline
The splendid passages of space supplied
Around the figures of immense design.

If thou refuse and fail, and downward turn
The faltering of enfeebled gaze, and seek
Some shade where thou should'st slumber and discern
No more the glorious orbs that rush and break—

Over the bounds of vacancy, and are
Problems of God, set speaking to desire—
With each old question answered in a star—
Lo, if thou fail for these, they fail in fire.

Dashed at thy spark of Spirit vision rolls
Out of their magnified portents, and waits
Vast apparition of eternal poles,
Drawing the confines of their huge estates.

And thou, beginning in thy glimmering sense
Of substance, should'st thou turning moan and shake
On sight the sharpness of a keen silence,
And from those lordly forms thy vision take?

Farewell, farewell? O Spirit, Spirit, yield;
Cleave to whatever flash for thee shall break,
Strike at the virtue of those worlds concealed,
Fly thitherward, whatever flight o'ertake.

But thou must pass the passages of air
With wing more light than cloud, more pure than
space,
Thou canst not ferry, for thy portage there,
With the poor pinions of exhausted race.

Lift on the wings of Spirit its essence,
As morning clouds rising o'ertake their light,
Beat on that pure, ethereal evidence
The equal fervor of a Spirit's flight.

Out on the globe of Earth I stood, and drew
Secret of sweetness from the shoreless tide
That streams round every star, and storms, and through
Vastness of vastness rushes, full supplied.

I stood upon the tiny speck unscared
Of that fierce-fashioned, fathomless abyss,
And o'er its frantic distance have I dared
Search some impulse should draw my soul from this.

So the strong stars sang me their steady tale
Of being's fixed companionship, and moved
Safely respective currents in the gale
Sweeping them onward through their fields beloved.

I saw them circle, and I heard my heart
Beat in its impulse for their favored ways,
I knew some sound would loosen and impart
The mystery to sing their splendid rays.

And while I stood and gazed, a consciousness
Flew with unspeakable fleetness through the sea
Of that eternal distance; calm excess
Of every space carried that message me.

Whatever face upgazing Heaven, or cries
 Whatever fashioned sorrow struck the heart,
Whatever watery waste where'er it lies,
 Wherever, tenant of the gloom, thou art,—

I cannot tell what wind shall draw thee there,
 What chime the bells of Heaven shall send o'er sea,
What gleams of Paradise shall gild the air,
 Where, in the Songs of Stars, refreshment be;—

Tis all I know for me the vanishment
 Of that imperial ether of unuse
Was Spirit's secret, made for Love and sent
 Into a Soul could not her claim refuse.

Whatever sun may rise, or colors go,
 Whatever glory burst with hope and shine,
From what recess whatever forms may flow,
 Eternity, the flood recedes in thine.

Lapped on this tide of Time emblazoned lies
 Transparently thy purpose and decree;
I am not Soul of Man, my Spirit flies
 With double instinct from the waves to thee.

Lo, from thy land that knows not guilt nor shade
A sweet disturbance parted by the sea,
Thy troubled bosom, Spirit, yearned and made
My Soul, and winged it out to destiny.

Spirit I come; cast up the rapid years,
O God sift down the sands of Time from me,
Strike from the world a whirling mist of tears—
A Soul of Man knows Love immortally.

Still in the world I am a subtle thing
Formed for the light of Heaven, where penetrate
Ostensibly the eyes of God ; I sing
Their knowledge through this fierce, bewildered state.

God turned the streams of Paradise, and drew
The ancient storage of their happy draught ;
Because I loved Him, lo, His Spirit threw
Life in the cup where all the dead had quaffed ;

Remembrance came : O wind of Paradise,
Driven from thy land ; impassioned, poor, exiled,
I saw again thy gentle bosom rise,
I saw thee rustle and thy country smiled.

Peace : Time and Substance of a fearful space
Wrought in the depths of Heaven ; rested in air
Millions of movements ; and a desert place
Blossomed to life—that Love should find it there.

It were a sin to Time to fail, nor take
The long transcriptions of its tale no more,
Eternity, O hope of Time, I break
The opening of thy record, and I pour—

The stainless purpose of my heart on thee,
Fashion divine, for me thy virtues bear
This deathless instinct of thine alchemy,
The Life that God gave Love and left in air !

* * * * *

And I, who see these things, see also Who
Swept of the fretful Earth her clouds, and broke
Her darkness with His Vision, and Who drew
Her shadows down, and cast her closures ope.

Through them I see, standing in steps are mine
Because I follow, and because mine eyes
As followers into tender spaces shine,
There see I blossoming His old replies.

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